

## Intentional Community Gathering in the Lehigh Valley 3/17/2012

Introduction: The places we visited on the tour were selected to accomplish two goals. First, acquaint people, generally with two broad areas within the Lehigh Valley and second to visit places that are examples of components of what an intentional community might develop. The third area, which we did not visit is the City of Bethlehem itself.

The Lehigh Valley is comprised of three main cities, Easton (pop. 35,000), Bethlehem (pop. 75,000) and Allentown (pop. 108,000). There are 10 colleges and universities in the area. These include: Lafayette College, Lehigh University, Moravian College, Northampton Community College, Cedar Crest University, Muhlenberg College, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Desales University, Penn State-Lehigh Valley Kutztown University.

The area is growing demographically and is situated 1 hour from Philadelphia and 1.5 hours from New York City.

10 am

Rob Sayre, Neil and Haruko Angelino, Geoffrey Hinkle, Gregg and Elke Noll met at the Rodale Farm([www.rodaleinstitute.org](http://www.rodaleinstitute.org)). It was good to see for ourselves what this group (Rodale) has accomplished over the past few decades. They showcased several models and aspects of sustainable living. Among our group there is a desire to incorporate such elements in an intentional community. We visited the book store and walked the grounds for a while.

This 340 organic research farm, owned by the Rodale Institute is the vision of what J.I. Rodale set out to create in the 1940's. In the process, they built a publishing business with revenues of at least \$500 million, employs around 1,000, mostly in NYC and Emmaus, PA and has successfully married their vision of organic living with a successful business model. They have also passed on their business to now, the third generation in their family.

It is situated in Eastern Berks county, not that far from Kutztown where a state university is located, Kutztown U. This area, roughly, west of Rt 100 in Western Lehigh county and south of I-78 is one target area.

12 am

Neil had researched some properties that might be suitable for us. Nothing to act on yet, just to get a feel for the area. We drove to an empty lot (40 acres) near Danielsville, PA. It had a scenic view of the mountains but was 30 min away from I 78 (a drawback)

This area, located in Northampton county, roughly goes from Rt 145 on the west to Rt. 33 on the east. The northern border is Blue Mountain which is also the northern border of the Lehigh Valley. It is rural, but within 15 miles of Allentown and Bethlehem.

1 pm

Upstairs food court of Wegmans in Allentown: We were joined by Ann Cantrell, Felicitas Moyer, Mike Stewart, Sue Stoia, Sally Sayre and Vicki Marcotte. Rob, a longtime resident of the area pointed out the advantages of the Lehigh valley (Jobs around Allentown and Bethlehem, less expensive than Bucks county, Bethlehem a cultural center)

Gregg began a guided discussion using power point (see attachment) and invited comments from all participants.

Sue: studied co-housing in college, wants to be connected socially with like minded people while caring for her husband who is wheelchair bound. She does not want to be isolated in the suburbs. Sharing public amenities (cars, lawnmowers) can save money. She wants us to look at West Grove DE, a co-housing development in her area.

Jeff: is seeking more recreational and educational opportunities for coming generations

Felicitas: an intentional community is a long time dream of hers. She wants to experience extended families.

Sally: had the concern, that when people retire, they can lose their connectedness to the community.

Felicitas: wants to find ways to connect to the larger community

Mike: he experienced an intentional community growing up at UTS. This setting can help create identity as Unificationist. He is currently living in Ithaca, but may have to move for professional reasons. He is in the process of acquiring his architect (this year) and engineer license (next year).

Ann: likes the support of a spiritual community

Elke: we are building on our camp experience, which is a good track record. The success of an intentional community depends on everyone growing and maturing. A spiritual community is good for that. Has been interested in creating an eco village since college, but observed some groups creating "hell on earth" due to immaturity.

Vicki: parents need to support each other, we need to create a positive spiritual environment.

Gregg: create a legacy, put our teachings to use, strengthen and support one another, simultaneously reaching out to the wider community.

Neil: his high schooler wants to be with his Shehaqua friends, it's a difficult climate at high school. Neil has already invested much time in search of a suitable property.

Rob: It's easy to get isolated. A community would be a nice place to receive visits from children and grandchildren. Some people could even benefit from living near an intentional community.

Mike: considerations: taxes and regulations. NY and NJ not favorable in this regard. Commute to major employment area should be 1 hr max.

Sue: likes Lancaster County

UTS was mentioned as a possibility, however, we don't own the property which could restrict our options.

Ann: wants warmer weather.

Mike: went on a road trip with another young family to check out other areas such as Morgantown WV, Pittsburgh PA, Lexington KY (nice city) Nashville (too built up), Knoxville (nice city, limited work opportunities).

Neil: wants to leave something tangible for future generations. Is committed to Eastern PA

Gregg: What should the housing look like? Different model homes?, not too structured, 2 BR homes, Condo?, duplex? Mixed residential

Mike: NODAL development, everything is in walking distance

Neil: check out different existing housing models, that are working well

Gregg: new construction vs. old?

Mike: how about well preserved used with room to grow?

UC members only? What if someone wants to rent or sell?

Gregg: we need a code of conduct

Neil: condo association can set rules

Gregg: how eco do we want to be? Is this going to be one of our core values?

Ann: does not want to be dependent on the grid

Sally: alternative energy not consistent, she likes to heat with wood (cost effective)

Gregg is inviting comments about a “common house”, the most important place for an intentional community:

- Build it first, people can live in it while building houses
- Finance it through guest stays
- Build it out gradually
- Make it multipurpose: church, home school, guest house, offices, pottery, gym, art studio
- Consider to convert a barn to a common house
- Should have 3000 to 5000 sq feet
- Prioritize what is essential (what functions)
- Limit community to 30 families/150 people or it becomes impersonal
- Have sub-neighborhoods

Gregg: 3 phases of growth, 10 families each

Mike: families with small children need their own laundry

Gregg: check out “Three Groves Eco Village” they already have put a lot of work into it. <http://www.threegrovesecovillage.org/>

Mike: time frame? Prepare funds?

Gregg: create a vision, so people can start shifting their situations, hears a lot of consensus among this group,

Geoffrey: many people have been thinking about this for a long time

Gregg: Shehaqua is a good foundation, create a clear vision, make drawings, visit other communities and learn

Ann: divide up duties

Next action steps? What do we all agree on?

- Mutual support and cooperation while respecting privacy
- Unification Faith based thus strengthening families
- Diversity: All ages, races and cultures living together / 3-4 generations
- Common House: dining, recreation, meetings, yoga, exercise, etc
- Ecologically responsible living: good stewards of our world
- Active participation in the larger community.
- A place of gardens & orchards
- Pathways & trails
- What else?

Mike will come up with design work

<http://www.threegrovesecovillage.org/professional-team.html>

Neil will look at properties

Hold conf. call beginning of April. Gregg will arrange.

3:00

Visit to an integrative health center [www.twinpondscenter.com](http://www.twinpondscenter.com)

One woman had a vision to create a place where practitioners of “alternative” healing arts could practice under one roof. Rob and Sally take Tai Chi classes there.

This is situated in western Lehigh county and is an example of what could be a business/retreat center that was located on an intentional community. The owner lives there and the income from this is part of her retirement.

4 pm

We looked at a town house development on the outskirts of New Tripoli (the Sayre’s hometown) homes were built close together (26 homes most side by side on 6-8 acres), open space was preserved, not everyone liked the pre-fab look. Considerations: do we want 1 story/2 story homes (1 story is better for people with limited mobility) The women liked older buildings and mature trees.

This is an example of a condo type development that was allowed because it hooks directly into the village sewage system and it does not use up farm land with suburban development. Generally speaking, Pennsylvania is trying to preserve its farmland, so developments close to small communities that use existing services are looked at more favorably than ones that have to rely upon each house having to have its own septic system.

5:30

Visit to Kempton New Church ([www.kemptonnewchurch.org](http://www.kemptonnewchurch.org))

Church/community center (the talent show was about to start)/ school K – 9)

Everything was bright, simple, well built and well kept. Rob and Sally knew some people there. The pastor’s wife gave us an informal tour. We were quite impressed by the facility and the kindness of the members of this little church.

The setting was way out in the country side (near Hawk Mountain) and extremely scenic.

This is an example of what 43 families have built, a place of worship and a school. This community lives separately in this rural area, but they have had enough students to keep the school running for the last 20 years. They have grades K-8. Their community has a High School in suburban Bryn Athern which is a suburb of Philadelphia. High School students live with local families to attend this. For those of you who remember camp at Laurel Hill in 2000, they use Laurel Hill much the same way we do Camp Shehaqua to provide a summer camp experience for their communities and families.

Feel free to add anything about our outing and resend to list.